

gay COMMUNITY NEWS

DECEMBER 13-19, 1987
VOLUME 15
NO. 22

BIPAD: 65498
\$1.00

FOR FIFTEEN YEARS THE LESBIAN AND GAY WEEKLY

December
Book
Review

Agnos wins S.F. mayor race

Gay men and lesbians line up for the State Assembly seat vacated by the pro-gay mayor-elect

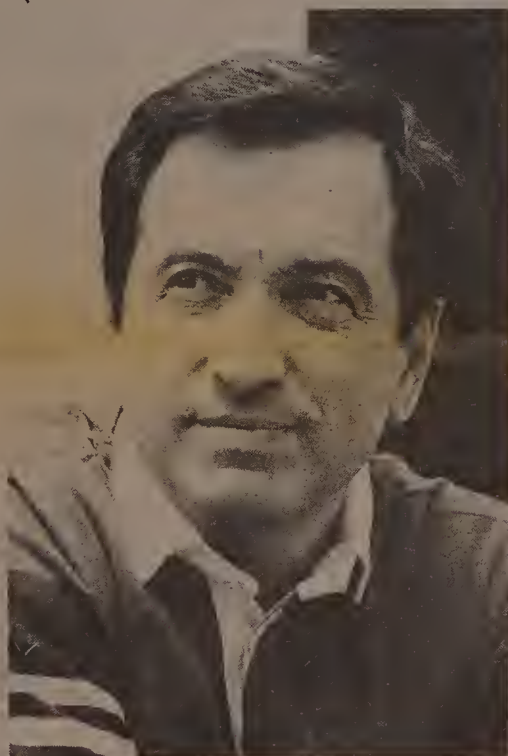
By Chris Bull

SAN FRANCISCO — The Dec. 8 landslide election of Mayor Art Agnos signals to many gay and lesbian activists a "triumphant" return to the progressive politics of former Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, the city's first openly gay elected official.

"This is our chance to return to the progressive, coalition spirit of Moscone that we have not had for the last eight years. We have been frozen out for so long that we are enthusiastic about the range of possibilities," said Gwen Craig, former president of the Harvey Milk Democratic Club.

Agnos, a member of the California State Assembly representing San Francisco's predominately gay and lesbian as well as lower income neighborhoods, outpolled his rival, Supervisor John Molinari, by a nearly three-to-one margin. Based on exit poll data, Agnos captured at least 70 percent of the gay and lesbian vote. According to most estimates, approximately 150,000 out of the 750,000 San Francisco residents are gay men or lesbians.

Both Agnos and Molinari are considered to be extremely supportive of the gay and lesbian community. But Agnos spent ten years in the state assembly working for the California gay rights bill and AIDS funding and against a series of anti-gay actions, including Lyndon LaRouche's quarantine legislation. Agnos also fought the Briggs In-



Art Agnos

itiative, which would have prevented gay men and lesbians from becoming public school teachers.

Agnos also opposed the San Francisco homeporting of the Navy's nuclear battleship, the USS Missouri, arguing that the

Continued on page 3

Copping to the mop scandal

After broad-based community outcry brought national attention to the Copley Plaza's exploitative 'no mop' regulation, the Boston hotel abandoned its attempt to put workers on their hands and knees

By Elizabeth Pincus

BOSTON — When management of the toney Copley Plaza Hotel ordered housekeepers recently to put down their mops and hand wash the floors, a furor arose among the hotel cleaning staff. Local union representatives and others concerned with issues affecting women workers also rallied in anger to protest the directive, which in essence forced housekeepers to scrub on their hands and knees. Following a rush of national media publicity that cast negative attention on the Copley Plaza — and under threat of an angry labor demonstration by hotel staff — the management recinded its new policy on Dec. 3.

To celebrate this victory of rank and file insurgence, a scheduled rally proceeded as planned at noon on Dec. 4 in the lush Copley Plaza lobby. About 100 demonstrators gathered to express their jubilation that an

exploitative regulation was overturned. "I felt ashamed to scrub with rags," said one room attendant who asked to remain anonymous. "I'm not a slave." She raised her voice to chant with other protestors, "We won't work on our knees, women work with dignity!"

Rally organizers said that, despite the return of mops, the dispute highlighted ongoing issues of concern to working people. "This posh hotel makes its money on the backs of poor working women," said Babara Neely, director of Women for Economic Justice in Boston. "It's clearly an outfit with no respect for its workers."

Neely explained that her organization joined with other groups including the Cambridge Women's Commission, the Boston chapter of the National Organization for

Continued on page 2

Rights bill sinking in Senate

Anger mounts in the Boston queer community as senators fail to move les/gay legislation and lobbyists snub loud gay protests

By Elizabeth Pincus

BOSTON — The Massachusetts gay rights bill remains stalemated on Beacon Hill. An effort to discharge the measure from the Committee on Third Reading by securing two-thirds Senate approval failed by an 11-23 vote on Dec. 7. Supporters expressed consternation over the diminishing chance for enacting the bill this legislative year.

Responding furiously to the Senate's failure to discharge, about 50 advocates of the bill marched through the State House following the Dec. 7 vote. Shouting "Shame!" they circled the halls outside Senate chambers for about an hour, attracting broad attention from workers in the building and assembled media representatives. According to a seasoned lobbyist, the rare disruption of State House operations startled observers.

Some gay rights supporters were further angered later in the day when lobbyists Arline Isaacson and Jane Morrison from the Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (MGLPC) publicly criticized direct protests in and outside the State House. Isaacson told the Boston *Globe* and several radio and television reporters that such actions alienate senators and are harming progress of the bill. Members of the newly-formed lesbian and gay direct action organization MASS ACT OUT and other activist groups disagreed, stating that senators are clearly not supportive anyway. They insisted that angry, direct confrontation is needed to force enactment of the gay rights bill which has met with resistance for 14 years.

"The government doesn't give us a damn thing," said Gary Dotterman, aide to Boston City Councilor David Scordras. "We have to go out and make demands. Let's be mad as hell."

Tony Watson, a participant in MASS

ACT OUT protests and other direct political actions, expressed particular anger at Arline Isaacson's public statements criticizing the lesbian and gay community. "She's put herself into the position of working against the interests of gay rights," Watson said. "She claims that our demonstrations make the senators uncomfortable. But that's what we want! We *are* going to be loud, rude and obnoxious. The senators can't continue to treat us like this."

The failed effort on Dec. 7 to discharge the measure was spearheaded by Sen. Royal Bolling, Sr. (D-Boston). Bolling, a longstanding bill supporter, stated, "The House of Representatives passed this bill, a clear majority in the Senate voted for it, and the governor wants to sign it into law. It's time to get this bill on the books."

However, after about an hour of debate on the Senate floor concerning the move to discharge, only eleven senators voted affirmatively. The vote sharply contrasted with the Senate vote of Nov. 23 when, with a 20-15 margin, senators sent the bill to the Committee on Third Reading. According to Isaacson, this decline in support may indicate a reluctance by senators to express opposition to Senate President William Bulger (D-So. Boston) and Sen. Arthur Lewis (D-Jamaica Plain), both staunch opponents of the legislation. Isaacson said "Some senators told me they can't vote against the leadership — it would be like shooting the king."

During Senate debate, an angry Sen. Michael Barrett (D-Cambridge) chastised his colleagues for withholding sufficient support for the bill. Barrett said, "The majority finds itself hamstrung by anti-democratic rules [concerning the need for two-thirds majority approval]. Let's get back to remembering the merits of the bill."

Continued on page 3

Quote of the week

“We have many members of our family who are gay and many friends, too. And none of them feel that the bill is necessary or appropriate.”
— Mary Lewis, wife of Mass. Sen Arthur Lewis, in phone conversation with Carl Mann, a civil rights activist who had called the Lewis residence to urge the senator to stop stalling passage of the Mass. lesbian and gay rights bill.

Gene type not related to AIDS

BERKELEY — Researchers report that a gene type previously suggested to increase susceptibility to AIDS does not seem to have any influence on infection rates or the disease’s progression.
British researchers had suggested that an inherited variant in a blood protein that carries vitamin D might account for some of the differences in people’s susceptibility to AIDS. But researchers at the University of California have found no evidence for this effect.
Research continues on the factors that cause some people to be exposed to the virus without harm while others suffer from ARC or die of AIDS. Genetic factors are suspected, although so far none have been confirmed to influence either an individual’s susceptibility to infection or the subsequent level of disease.

□Lori Kenschaft

High-tech AIDS info

LONG BEACH, CA — Students at the Long Beach California campus of California State University can access AIDS information 24 hours a day using the university’s computer system. The program, called AIDS Info On-Line, is available without charge from the university’s AIDS Information Project. The program provides basic information about AIDS, abstracts of journal articles, and the addresses and phone numbers of local AIDS organizations. This information can be easily updated or customized to meet a particular organization’s needs. In addition, the program allows users to test their knowledge and keeps an anonymous record of their scores for health workers who can determine the areas in which AIDS knowledge is weakest. Users can also post questions on an electronic bulletin board which will be answered by the project staff.
The program, which can run on microcomputers or mainframes, was designed by Richard Wolitski, a graduate student in psychology. For more information or a copy of the program, write to Richard Wolitski, AIDS Education Project, Psychology Department, California State University, Long Beach, CA 90840.

□Nancy De Luca

Queers qualify for cheap Swedish flights

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN — The domestic airline Linjeflyg has announced that gay people living together qualify for the same cheap family fares available to straight couples. Linjeflyg offers a half-price ticket to one “spouse” if the other buys a full fare.

□Lori Kenschaft

Canadian censorship continues

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA — Canadian Customs agents seized eight copies of a book by award-winning author Anne Cameron on the grounds that they contain “obscene” material depicting bestiality and should therefore not be delivered to the Little Sister’s Book and Art Emporium. *Dzellarhons*, which is available in the Vancouver Public Library and in other Vancouver bookstores, retells Native American legends, including one about a woman who marries a bear. After much protest the books were released.

This incident is one of many detentions by

Canadian Customs of books ordered by Little Sister’s or Glad Day, the Toronto gay bookstore. Affected titles include *Caught Looking: Feminism, Pornography, and Censorship*, *Sexwork* (an anthology by women in the sex industry), *The Joy of Gay Sex*, *The Advocate*, and works by Proust, Baudelaire, Cocteau, Gide, and Genet. According to *Rites*, the same titles encounter no problems when they are ordered by non-gay bookstores.
Little Sister’s is planning to bring an issue of *The Advocate* to the Supreme Court in an attempt to prove that existing obscenity legislation is in violation of the country’s Charter and to influence proposed federal anti-porn legislation.
The Canadian Committee Against Customs Censorship publishes *Censorship Bulletin* and can be reached at 598A Yonge St., Toronto, ON, Canada, M4Y 1Z3.

□Lori Kenschaft

Campaigning on AIDS

WASHINGTON, DC — A memorandum describing how Republicans could use AIDS to their advantage in the 1988 elections has created controversy over its authenticity as well as its content.
Democrats released the memo, purportedly from the Republican consultant Charles Rand, on Nov. 5. Rand denied authorship, saying “I find it pretty reprehensible that anybody would use AIDS as an issue.”
According to the New York Times, the memo stated that AIDS could be a “paramount” issue in the ’88 elections, but that it “could easily backfire” if done “in a heavy or blatant way.” “The Republican Party must never seem to be inciting a reaction, only responding to it. If we are low key, logical sounding and stressing the importance of ‘protecting’ families from the disease, then we could find ourselves in excellent shape in ’88.”
The memo was labelled “Confidential Note” and was addressed “To: HD” “From: CR.” It was stapled to another memo from Rand to Harvey Dinerstein and Paul Holm, Jr. with a list of Democrats who are potentially vulnerable in the upcoming elections.

□Lori Kenschaft

Philly police chief bars list of PWAs

PHILADELPHIA — Police Commissioner Kevin Tucker has prohibited officers from compiling or possessing lists of the names or addresses of people with communicable diseases. The order followed controversy over a district’s posted list of residents suspected of having AIDS.
Philadelphia’s *Gay News* reports that the American Civil Liberties Union is still considering a lawsuit on behalf of people with AIDS in the 18th district. The ACLU is also ready to take action to ensure that all copies of the list have been destroyed. While official copies no longer exist, “we are concerned there are other copies still in the possession of individual officers,” explained ACLU Director Barry Steinhardt.

□Lori Kenschaft

Liposuction sucks

WASHINGTON, DC — A panel of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons has approved liposuction — a form of surgery which removes body fat with a vacuum pump — as a safe cosmetic procedure, despite concerns among feminist women’s health advocates that the surgery’s dangers outweigh its benefits.
One hundred thousand suctions have been performed since 1982, with 11 deaths and 9 serious complications, reports *off our backs*. Liposuction is the most popular and fastest growing form of cosmetic surgery, with a 78 percent increase in its use in the last two years.
Most deaths after liposuction result from blood or fat clots that block blood flow. Death has also resulted from infection and organ perforation. Other complications include pain, bruising, wavy skin, and numbness.
Liposuction cannot help people who have

health problems exacerbated by their weight, since it creates only differences in appearance. Nevertheless, it has been promoted in women’s magazines as a weight reduction technique.

□Lori Kenschaft

RFD solicits pre-Stonewall history articles

BAKERSVILLE, NC — *RFD*, a reader-written “country journal” for gay men, is planning a new Gay History department with articles and features about pre-Stonewall times.
The journal solicits both original research and reinterpretations, with a special plea for gay history of rural areas, personal experiences with gay culture in the ’20s, ’30s, and ’40s, and articles that reveal gay history outside the “western-Christian white-male” tradition. Send submissions to *RFD*, Rt. 1 Box 127-E, Bakersville, NC 28705.

□Lori Kenschaft

Herpes suit

CHICAGO — A man who allegedly transmitted genital herpes to a woman may be sued for monetary damages, a Circuit Court judge has ruled. The suit contends that the man had a duty to abstain from sexual contact, to warn his partner about his herpes, and to use a condom, according to the Chicago *Sun Times*. The woman is asking \$1 million in damages.

□Lori Kenschaft

AMA makes ethics statement

WASHINGTON — The American Medical Association (AMA) has declared it is unethical for doctors to refuse to treat people who have tested positive for HIV. This statement was made amid reports that a few doctors had turned away people with AIDS, according to the Chicago *Tribune*.
The statement read in part: “A person who is afflicted with AIDS needs competent, compassionate treatment. Neither those who have the disease nor those who have been infected with the virus should be subjected to discrimination based on fear or prejudice, least of all by members of the health care community.”

□Lori Kenschaft

NEWSNOTES
COMPILED BY
JENNIE MCKNIGHT

Mop

Continued from page 1

Women and Local 26 of the Boston Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union to stage a rally to demonstrate outrage as well as celebration. Members of Boston’s lesbian and gay community participated in the protest to register anger at the hotel’s exploitative treatment of women workers. According to Neely, demonstrators hoped to prevent Copley Plaza management from harassing hotel workers for their outspoken opposition to the no-mop rule.
“If there’s any retaliation, we’ll be back in full force,” Neely said. “We’re not going to stand for this, or stoop for this.”
The 44 room attendants at the Copley Plaza, who earn a starting wage of \$7.15 per hour, are all women. Most are Black, Haitian or Latina and over the age of 40. Barbara Rice of Local 26 stated that the hotel and restaurant industry enforces hierarchical discrimination by tracking women of color into housekeeping or laundry services where they have little chance for advancement. She said Copley Plaza room attendants expressed empowerment from the ex-

Continued on page 8


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Birthday mugger held

By Elizabeth Pincus
 BOSTON — Frank Komnenus, Jr., the principal suspect in a series of drug-related muggings in Massachusetts gay bars, remains in custody in the East Cambridge Jail. He was transferred there following his arrest in Ledyard, Connecticut, on Nov. 12, and is being held on \$50,000 cash bail or \$500,000 bond.
 Komnenus, a Charlestown, Massachusetts, resident, faces charges of kidnapping, assault with a dangerous weapon and larceny for his alleged involvement in the attacks, under the name "Dominic Perini." (See *GCN*, Vol. 15, Nos. 15 and 16)
 After an initial delay, a probable cause hearing has been set for Dec. 18. The hear-



Lesbians and gay men agitate for passage of gay rights bill at State House steps, Dec. 7

Sinking

Continued from page 1
 Insofar as we're bound by the rules, let's discharge the measure and get on with our business."
 Barrett admitted that it now seems impossible to muster two-thirds support. He expressed hope that the rules would be suspended and the majority vote of the Senate would carry.
 "The key thing," Barrett said, "is whether the Senate appears dignified and democratic to the public. It's embarrassing now — we look ineffective. The Senate needs help extricating itself from anti-democratic procedures."
 Barrett called on Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis to take a leading role in

Mayor

Continued from page 1
 Navy violates the city's human rights ordinance, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Molinari, who was recently pictured campaigning at the San Francisco Eagle, a leather bar, is considered to be more conservative, with close ties to the business community and the city's political establishment, including out-going Mayor Dianne Feinstein. Feinstein has angered the gay and lesbian community by opposing domestic partners legislation, while favoring mandatory HIV testing for prisoners and homeporting of the Missouri.
 Craig said that Molinari "shot himself in the foot" by supporting the Navy, with its notoriously homophobic policies. Craig explained that Molinari attempted to pit the Black community — which by and large supports homeporting because it would revitalize the Hunter's Point shipyard, a large employer in a Black neighborhood — against the gay community. "Molinari called homeporting a 'phony issue' implying that gays don't care about jobs for Blacks," said Craig.
 Molinari also hurt himself by claiming that Agnos "has a radical and dark vision of the future, a vision that is more reflective of the tumultuous '60s than the 1980s." According to some observers, progressive voters resented the negative picture of the 1960s, which helped bring about, among other things, the lesbian and gay liberation movement.

ing will determine whether sufficient evidence exists to warrant a trial. If so, a trial date is expected within four to six months. Attorney Frederick Connors has been privately retained for Komnenus' defense and Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney J.W. Carney, Jr., will prosecute. Carney said that he expects to have more detailed information about the evidence in the case by late December.
 Joyce Collier, an advocate for lesbian and gay victims of crime at the Victim Recovery Program of the Fenway Community Health Center, said that the Program was instrumental in instigating the initial investigation of the case by the Cambridge police. She explained that her agency is still in communication with several victims of the drug-mugging crimes, and will likely be involved in assisting to procure evidence for the prosecution. A new Victim Advocate will soon join the staff of the Victim Recovery Program. Resolving the "Dominic Perini" case will be among her/his first priorities, Collier said. □

pushing for gay rights legislation. Lobbyist Isaacson also described the governor as a key player in the final weeks of the legislative session. Dukakis has stated his support, but has made no overt offer of assistance since the Dec. 7 vote. Meanwhile, advocates of the gay rights bill continue their daily afternoon vigil on the State House steps.
 Bruce Goldstein of the United Fruit Company, a radical men's affinity group, said during a rally this week, "I kind of doubt that the bill will make it. But these protests are good for stirring and motivating us. They bring together people with diverse backgrounds and politics."
 "We'll keep the fight going no matter what," said Black lesbian activist Angela Bowen. "We're gonna mow them down and we're gonna win." □

Agnos put together a winning coalition that included the gay and lesbian community, low and moderate income residents in San Francisco, environmentalists, and Greek-Americans, as well as liberal leaders from around the country. He also garnered considerable support from labor unions, which canvassed the city before the election, helping compensate for his fundraising disadvantage.
 Pat Norman, a Black lesbian activist and organizer for the March on Washington, said Agnos has the unique ability to bring constituents together. "We believe that together we can create a model city." Norman said she looked forward to helping Agnos fulfill his commitment to a new vision of government in San Francisco, which stresses social services for the poor, the homeless and the elderly along with renewed support for public education and AIDS funding. "He has a commitment to social services like no other elected official," said Norman.
 The Larkin Street Youth Center, which caters to the lesbian and gay youth who flock to San Francisco, is an example of the kind of program Agnos has pledged to support, said Norman. Feinstein gave the center only grudging support, according to Norman. The center's work — providing AIDS education, health and mental health care to gay and lesbian youth — is highly controversial for most mainstream candidates, Norman said, but that Agnos pledged to increase its funding next year.

Continued on page 6

Treating the living

As health care and AIDS activists call for a national commitment to developing promising AIDS treatments, the National Gay Rights Advocates take on the government's 'negligence' with a lawsuit

By Chris Bull
 WASHINGTON, DC — Given the poor prospects for an immediate cure or vaccine for AIDS, many health and AIDS activists have turned their attention toward alternative treatments that prolong the lives of people with AIDS (PWAs).
 "The single greatest issue now must be securing treatments. We must begin to shift our emphasis. I am distraught at the unspoken consensus in the gay community that one million will die and that all we should talk about are hospital costs. We must treat the living," said Paul Boneberg of San Francisco's Mobilization Against AIDS.
 In an attempt to address the government's lack of attention to potentially useful drugs and therapies, the National Gay Rights Advocates (NGRA) has filed suit against the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The suit charges the federal agencies with negligence for failing to test and license numerous promising drugs. The suit asks that the testing and licensing process for other drugs be expedited as it was for AZT — the only AIDS drug licensed by the FDA so far.
 Oral arguments in the case will be heard Dec. 16 by U.S. District Court Judge Norma Johnson.

The NGRA suit reads "...this is a case to give desperate and desperately ill plaintiffs a month or more of life, through immediate access to promising experimental drugs, so that they might live to see a cure for AIDS and benefit from it. The drugs are available, but plaintiffs cannot lawfully get them in this country, for one reason — one irrational and improper: the government will not receive royalties or other remuneration for the distribution of these drugs; and Government employees will be unable to aggrandize their personal reputations by developing their own drugs." The suit names 13 drugs that have "shown promise as effective treatments," but which the FDA has either ignored or delayed licensing.
 Jean O'Leary, executive director of NGRA, said with over one million people infected with HIV, it is "high time" the mainstream medical and scientific communities take alternative treatments more seriously. She said it is becoming increasingly clear to the gay and lesbian community that treatments may eventually be able to prolong life until a cure can be developed.
 Efforts to make new treatments available have included pressuring the federal government to take action as well as undertaking privately funded research. Despite the government's general failure to emphasize treatments in policy making, AIDS activists have had some limited success obtaining funds to test alternative drugs. In October, the Department of Health and Human Services announced it would spend over \$18 million to finance 17 new Clinical Studies Groups, involving over 2000 PWAs.
 In addition, the Community Research Initiative (CRI) was recently licensed by the New York State Health Department to begin experiments on Pentamidine, AL721 and Ampligen, among others. The trials are privately funded and involve about 40 physicians who have extensive experience treating PWAs, according to Paul Van Souder, Executive Director of the People with AIDS Coalition, which is associated with CRI. Experimental drugs will be provided to PWAs with supervision by their own physicians. Van Souder said the results of the experiments would be evaluated along with existing studies in order to create a more coherent body of knowledge about alter-

native therapies.
 Despite the example of CRI, getting private funding for promising treatments has been as difficult as moving the federal government. It is estimated that it costs almost \$80 million to develop, test, license and manufacture an AIDS drug. The gay community, according to John James, Publisher of *AIDS Treatment News* in San Francisco, does not have the resources and corporations are reluctant to take on the financial risk of developing drugs. "It's hard to make \$80 million back, let alone a profit, which is their whole notion in the first place," said James. Drugs that do not appear to be a "sure thing" are discounted. James said the corporations have put most of their resources into developing HIV antibody tests, which are in ever-increasing demand. Corporate executives predict, he said, that there will be more testing for prisoners, for immigrants and for people who are hospitalized, but they are not so confident a particular drug will ever be in demand. □ filed from Boston

What was the deal with AZT?

By Chris Bull
 During the course of filing suit against the government for failing to test and license numerous promising AIDS drugs, National Gay Rights Advocates (NGRA) discovered evidence of what might be considered a "pay-off" to a government agency by the makers of the one AIDS drug currently approved. According to the NGRA, Burroughs-Wellcome, the makers of AZT, recently "donated" \$55,000 to the National Cancer Institute. The same day the "donation" was made, the FDA granted Burroughs the exclusive right to market AZT for seven years — even though the patent on the drug expired nearly ten years ago. According to the NGRA, a doctor at the NCI, Samuel Broder, claims to have asked Burroughs for the \$55,000 to support his work.
 A prescription for AZT costs nearly \$10,000 per year. Although Burroughs says it has spent more than \$80 million to develop the drug, many AIDS activists believe the drug is so highly priced because the FDA has refused to license drugs manufactured by competing companies.
 According to NGRA legal director Leonard Graff, the Burroughs "donation" violates Executive Order 1122 "Standards of Ethical Conduct For Government Officers And Employees," which prohibits government employees from accepting "anything of monetary value" from any person or corporation that is associated with the agency.
 AIDS activists told *GCN* the Burroughs "donation" is evidence of the systematic exclusion of new drugs and treatments by the mainstream medical and scientific communities. Large drug companies such as Burroughs benefit from "favoritism" from the FDA and NIH because they have high-level connections there and because they have expertise in the highly technical and complicated drug testing and licensing process. Consequently, promising alternative drugs are relegated to the underground movement. □

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much as they could).

On October 11 we stopped whispering and spoke with conviction, not to entertain with our personalities, but to gain our due respect forthwith.

The minority communities of many races and creeds were watching our shining.

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Questioning authority ... why?

Dear *GCN*:

Recently *The Enquirer* ran an article on the Marion prison. In this article it was explained that Marion was the toughest [Federal] prison in the nation. Allegedly Marion houses only the most difficult of prisoners, thereby justifying the conditions.

I was not astonished by the 23-hour isolation these men daily endure, nor by the body chaining they undergo each time they leave their cells, because I'm aware of the outrageous and dehumanizing practices our Criminal Justice System imposes. In the state facility here in Washington where I've been for 1½ years (in the "Intensive Management" Unit), the conditions are no different.

My disgruntlement lies with the knowledge that the public is not aware that Marion is *not* the only facility that uses such harsh means to "correct" prisoners' behavior, thinking and spirit.

Women here have been placed in stripped [totally empty] cells for up to six months (myself included) *without* any infracted behavior or incident. Denied books, paper and pencils, water and even mattresses, are a few of the practices that are employed when they want to. Including a vast assortment of humiliation tactics and threats designed to intimidate a prisoner into silence and stop her questioning authority.

This unit is filled with prisoners diagnosed with "psychological problems". Suffice it to say that if you had no "mental" problems prior to coming here, with its isolation tactic, you may develop some serious outrage.

The prisoners here have large tasks ahead. Fortunately a support group of prisoners, families and friends is evolving, which will expose the illegal (!) and dehumanizing actions of the Department of Corrections and the Parole Board. It is only with such public assistance that changes can be made.

It is astonishing how the American public is able to maintain a brazen naivete regarding its prison system, especially since countless reports and studies indicate the futility of this way of curbing 'crime'. Recidivism [returning to prison] remains shamefully high. Maintenance costs for prisoners are incredible. Job training and education would be much cheaper. Prisons increase crime, if anything, and guarantee the return of many offenders by not offering them a fair chance to get started again once out.

We must disempower those bureaucrats who grow fat on the law-and-order dollars given to perpetuate and maintain the prison business as we know it today.

Silence is acquiescence and conspiracy. You *can* make a difference.

Veronica Culver Compton
276077
Box 17
Gig Harbor, WA 98335

Obituaries: balancing life and death

Dear *GCN*:

A frequent sign of the current health crisis is the spate of obituaries in the gay press. It is encouraging to see our dead better remembered now than in the past. What is questionable, however, is the manner in which these obituaries are sometimes presented.

Our newspapers have responded to AIDS, in part, by featuring obituaries very prominently, often in opening pages. In other cases, one finds obituaries sprinkled throughout a newspaper.

Standard newspaper style places obituaries in a group, somewhere following the main news section, unless the deceased is a well known person. To position them otherwise can draw inordinate attention to the deaths.

Perhaps editors are using obituaries to point out the seriousness of this health crisis. Such a motive is understandable, but

poorly reasoned.

It is inappropriate to use obituaries to frighten readers, or to provoke political or behavioral change. This approach creates more anxiety than enlightenment. Further, it dishonors the dead. There are salient points to be made, but they belong on the editorial page and in investigative reports.

Obituaries have an important place and function in our media. So do notices of gay unions, anniversaries, births and adoptions in gay families. These events are significant in all lives; gay lives are no exception.

It is significant and vital, for example, that the gay press has included the names of surviving partners in their obituaries.

We gay folk, like straight, thrive on love and committed relationships. Support for these unions strengthens them and our community. The wide world certainly won't respect our relationships if our own community fails to validate them.

The social rituals that support us deserve published recognition. Public declarations of our gay relationships are still acts of courage. I challenge the gay media to take greater notice of them, and to more carefully balance matters of life and death.

Demian, Co-Editor/Publisher
PARTNERS: The Newsletter for Gay & Lesbian Couples
Seattle, Wa

Mariel Cuban gays: still in prison ('detention') after seven years!

Dear *GCN*:

This is getting rougher for us as the time goes by. It's been 7 years so far and I don't even know when this is going to stop. I remember when I was in segregation and GCN/Mike wrote me and said I was strong to be holding up in here [for no reason other than that neither the U.S. government nor the Cuban government wants them!]. Well, those were very beautiful words and I read that letter every now and then, but I'll tell you, my strength's failing, I'm afraid.

Will I ever be free in this country? These immigrations people break every law in the name of 'law'. They have no respect for anybody's rights. They do whatever they want to do and they aren't accountable to anyone. Can't anybody see what they're doing to us? Out there people are talking about South Africa, Iran, the Soviet Union and countries thousands of miles away. Can't anyone see what's happening right in front of your eyes? We're human beings as much as the Soviets or the Africans. And we're in prison for seven years for no crime, no charges, no sentence. We don't even have the chance to run to another country now.

Why can't somebody stand up and say this has already gone too far!

Please help if you can,
Jose Castro
Box PMB
00858-131
Atlanta, GA 30315

Woman to woman love

Dear *GCN*:

It is the mutual vitality of understanding each other more and more that grants us the ability to console each other. When our love is felt in the heart and not just batted about in the air, then we can trust each other.

I am a lesbian GCN fan and also my woman Pamela, and we'd like you to put this article in 'our' paper so we can share our insight of woman to woman love with other gay women.

Arleen Baker and Pamela Abner
Indiana Women's Prison
401 N. Randolph St.
Indianapolis, IN 46201

GLAD condemns harassment of CCLSF

By Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders

In recent months, Boston has witnessed a media campaign against the Committee for Civil Liberties and Sexual Freedom (CCLSF), a group organized in June in response to the arrest of Donald Dobson, a former bank president, on charges of having sex with minors. The campaign reached its height with the demands of the Boston *Herald* and certain city councilors that two aides to Councilor David Scondras be dismissed because they were members of the CCLSF. On September 30, the Boston City Council voted to remove the two staffers, Gary Dotterman and French Wall, from the Council payroll.* This series of events took place in the midst of the Scondras reelection campaign and at the time when the Massachusetts Senate was preparing to debate the gay rights bill.

Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) believes that the media campaign against the Committee for Civil Liberties and Sexual Freedom and the firings of Wall and Dotterman raise serious civil rights concerns. Every American has the constitutionally-protected right of free speech and association, a right which includes membership in the CCLSF. Every American has the right to a fair trial; the CCLSF is well within the bounds of civil liberties advocacy in its efforts to press for that right in an atmosphere devoid of the hysteria and prejudice we have seen exhibited in recent weeks. Despite the many

Mindful of the fact that the overwhelming number of cases of child abuse are committed by heterosexuals, we care very deeply about the well-being of young people.

conflicting emotions and opinions engendered by the issue of adult/adolescent sex, the goal of the CCLSF to advocate for the protection of the rights of all parties — both the adolescent and the adult — is an admirable and necessary one. Any effort on the part of law enforcement authorities to harass the CCLSF runs contrary to our most basic liberties. Consenting to the harassment of the CCLSF may lead to subsequent attacks on other unpopular causes, both gay and straight.

Furthermore, we believe that the dismissal of individuals from their jobs simply because they are members of a controversial organization violates their first amendment rights. A public official has the privilege of dismissing his staffers if they fail to perform their jobs effectively. But the Boston City Council sets a dangerous precedent by removing a councilor's aides from the city payroll — against the stated wishes of that councilor — for belonging to an organization of which the majority of that body disapproves. What is to stop the council from firing someone in the future because he or she might belong to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the National Organization for Women, or the National Rifle Association?

We believe the lesbian and gay community is properly concerned about the possibilities for exploitation in relationships between older men and adolescents. Mindful of the fact that the overwhelming number of cases of child abuse are committed by heterosexuals, we care very deeply about the well-being of young people. At the same time, we are disturbed by charges by the CCLSF that the two adolescents who were material witnesses in the Dobson case were placed in locked facilities for a period of six months without their consent, as well as the claim of one of the boys that he had no access to a Spanish-speaking counselor. We are concerned that the boys in question

may have been deprived of their rights to counsel and to due process because they are Puerto Rican.

In conclusion, we believe the gay and lesbian community must stand together in strong opposition to any attempts to harass the CCLSF and its members. When basic rights of free speech, association, privacy and due process of law of any members of our community are threatened, we are all in peril.

*[On November 18, a federal court judge ordered the reinstatement of Dotterman and Wall. See *GCN* Vol. 15 No. 19.]

GLAD is a public interest legal foundation, based in Boston, which litigates and educates on lesbian and gay civil rights issues throughout New England.

"Speaking Out" is part of our continuing effort to provide a true forum of opinion for the community. We encourage you to send your ideas, feelings and comments to us, and to respond to ideas expressed in this space. The opinions expressed are those of the author and are not intended to represent the views of the GCN membership. Submissions must be TYPED, DOUBLE-SPACED, AND NO LONGER THAN FIVE PAGES. Send to: Speaking Out, GCN, 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116.

Staff comings and goings

GCN welcomes three new staff members: Jennie McKnight, Christopher Wittke and Elizabeth Pincus. Jennie, our new news editrix, had been a D.C. news correspondent for a year before taking her current post. Christopher Wittke, our typesetter/features writer, has contributed a number of pieces over the last few years and is perhaps most known for his "True Safe Sex Story" in our March on Washington issue. Elizabeth Pincus, of Nashville fame, is our new local reporter. She was an interim national reporter earlier this year.

Other staff changes include Stephanie Poggi's move from news editrixing to features and Dan Page's move from advertising coordinator to promo homo. Wickie Stamps will be joining the staff in January as the new advertising coordinator. Welcome Wickie!

This brings us to the good-byes. (Sigh.) Bye Kim Westheimer, local reporter extraordinaire, bye promo queen Catherine Lohr; bye typesetter through thick and thin Ann Fry. Bye-bye! P.S. Don't be strangers!

Slaves to technology

Due to unforeseen and unbelievably traumatic typesetting snafus, **GCN** has had to settle for this abbreviated version of the book review. Thanks to all the book review writers for your work and we promise a full-size back-on-monthly-schedule book review beginning in January.

Anniversary extravaganza



United Fruit Company (above) charmed the pants off an overflowing crowd celebrating the anniversaries of six local social change organizations: Gay Community News (15 years), Mobilization for Survival (10 years), Resist (20 years), Radical America (20 years), National Lawyers' Guild (50 years), and South End Press (10 years). Joining the Fruits in performing were author Grace Paley and local band Didi Stewart and Friends. The December 5 event at Villa Victoria Cultural Center was emceed by Cindy Patton and Connie Chan.

Rock

Continued from back page
noted that more people of color are now attending the tea dances, the membership has remained nearly all white.

"We labor under the same problems that a lot of white feminist groups struggle with," Peacott said of the group's efforts to encourage participation by people of color. "We want to keep expanding our music, our venues. Do we need to play more reggae/soul/salsa to attract a more diverse group, or does it go against the underlying rock aesthetic of what we're doing? We're very aware of the issues."

R.A.S. also wants to be open to diverse ages and to straight people, bisexuals and lesbians and gay men. Nicholas described the group as predominately lesbian-identified. Though Peacott added that when R.A.S. stages an event at straight clubs, the crowd is widely varied. "We want to present alternatives for everyone," Peacott said. "Kids are listening to such drivel, such obviously macho-dominated rock 'n roll. It's really important to show that women can take back music from the fat cat rock establishment."

Nicholas explained that R.A.S. remains committed to low-cost events. The c.R.A.S.h. courses in music technology are offered free of charge through the Women's School, a program of the Women's Center in Cambridge. Women's jams, the newsletter, buttons and tea dances all cost nothing to \$2.00 on a sliding scale. Proceeds from every other R.A.S. tea dance go to various groups — their next event benefits the Women's School. Currently, R.A.S. is trying to launch a second monthly tea dance at Man Ray, a club connected to Cambridge's Campus bar. The group also hopes to resume promoting live shows, as they did in the early 80's, and to start publishing their newsletter more frequently.

Many R.A.S. members are themselves musicians. Peacott began playing music after joining the group, citing R.A.S. as a major source of support. Nicholas, too, has picked up the drums since her involvement. She said that members' tastes range from hardcore to synthesized pop to country-influenced rock.

"That's what I like about the group," Nicholas said. "People are into such different things. Lots of us have extensive record collections. One member has this whole collection of 50s rockabilly by women." Peacott mentioned a new rockabilly compilation record called "Wild, Wild Young Women." She said, "Like the blues, the lyrics reflect the headset of the times, so of course it's not all 'non-sexist.' But it's a great record, really connected to the roots of rock 'n roll."

Both Nicholas and Peacott stressed R.A.S.'s strong anti-censorship stance amid a political climate some see as rife with rightwing backlash. Specifically, they spoke against the Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC) organized by author Tipper Gore which advocates labelling record albums with lyrics deemed 'dangerous' to young people. "The PMRC could really give two shits about sexism," Peacott said. "They

are trying to censor leftwing politics and radical ideas. Their arguments couldn't possibly be confused with R.A.S.'s philosophy and politics."

Agreed Nicholas, "R.A.S. is totally against censorship. We offer feminist alternatives." Nicholas explained that members have varying opinions about the kind of political action the group takes. She added, "Certain people want to be more militant...yeah, R.A.S. definitely encourages militant action."

The next Rock Against Sexism tea dance/disc party will be held Dec. 27 at 1270 Boylston Street in Boston, 6-10 p.m. The R.A.S. newsletter is available at Boston-area bookstores including New Words, Glad Day and Revolution books. For further information call 783-5565 or write R.A.S. at 464 Harrison Ave., basement, Boston, MA 02118.

Mayor

Continued from page 3

The election of Agnos as mayor raises the possibility that he might endorse a gay man or lesbian for his vacated assembly seat. Several prominent gay men and lesbians are rumored to be interested in the seat, including Supervisor Harry Britt, who lost a close race for U.S. Congress to Nancy Pelosi last April; Tim Wolfred, who was recently elected to his second term on the Community College Board of Trustees and is the executive director of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation; Roberta Achtenberg, founder of the Lesbian Rights Project and a prominent lawyer; and Pat Norman.

Norman said that she is "seriously considering" entering the race, but that she wants to make sure the community does not become divided over a candidate. The election will be held in early April. Achtenberg and Wolfred were unavailable for comment.

Britt claims not to be interested in the seat unless he were to be "drafted" for a run. Paul Van Gorder, Britt's legislative assistant, told GCN that Britt did not receive much support from straight voters in his run for Congress. John Burton, a popular former U.S. Representative who resigned because of drug problems, has already announced his candidacy. Van Gorder said that Burton would be a formidable opponent because he has both money and the support of the California political establishment combined with excellent name recognition. An estimated 30 percent of the district is gay or lesbian.

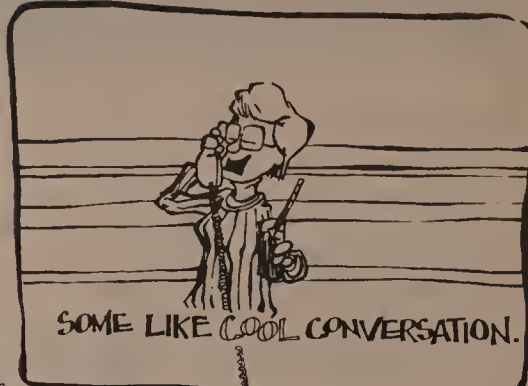
Several local activists said, however, that Britt has been told not to run because of the ill will he created by endorsing Molinari, who had backed Britt's earlier congressional campaign. Wolfred, Achtenberg and Norman are all viewed as experienced and capable candidates, although many activists said they believe there might be more enthusiasm for a lesbian candidate. Van Gorder said that the chances of a lesbian or gay candidate hinge on an endorsement from Agnos. Agnos has so far refused to endorse anyone for the seat.

□ filed from Boston

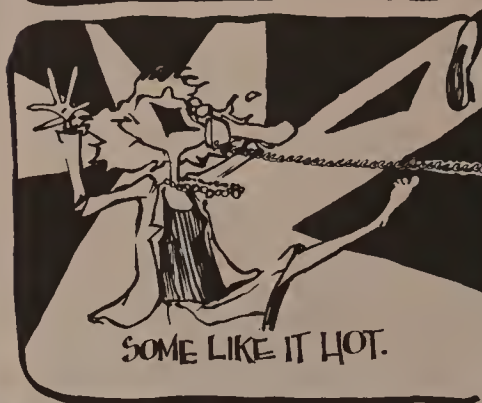
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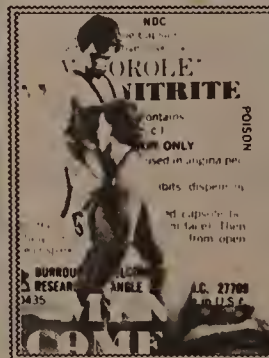
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A bedrock beneath our feet

Joan Nestle's *A Restricted Country* fuses sexual passion and political commitment

A Restricted Country

Joan Nestle

Firebrand Books, Ithaca, NY 1987

\$8.95 paper, 189pp

Reviewed by Shelley Mains

To live without history is to live like an infant, constantly amazed and challenged by a strange and unnamed world. There is a deep wonder in this kind of existence, a vitality and curiosity and a sense of adventure that we do well to keep alive all of our lives. But a people who are struggling against a world that has decreed them obscene need a stronger bedrock beneath their feet.

— Joan Nestle, "Voices from Lesbian Herstory"

As I read *A Restricted Country*, a collection of essays, speeches and erotic pieces by Joan Nestle, I realized how strongly I've been craving a sense of history. In an era when our gay, lesbian, feminist, and anti-racist struggles seem to be losing ground, I need to be aware of that "strong bedrock" Nestle refers to: a heritage of personal and political queer resistance. I hope it can sustain and empower us.

Nestle's book, chronicling her life through "the queer fifties, the Lesbian sixties, the feminist seventies" and into the eighties, offers us a heritage. "For gay people," writes Nestle, "history is place where the body carries its own story." Nestle's accounts of her own body's history, including erotic works that draw us into the experiences of lesbians perhaps unlike ourselves — a '50s femme, a pair of dykes meeting middle age in the '80s — are rich documents of lesbian history.

But beyond documenting lesbian life, Nestle's essays — whether on bar culture, the Selma-Montgomery civil rights march, or the feminist debates over pornography — use the focus of sexuality to develop radical political perspectives on a range of issues. She writes that we must pay attention to "how we fill our days and nights as we participate in any given economic system, how our flesh survives under different political systems, how we humanize gender tyranny, how we experience womanhood and maleness in all the superstructures of class and race." Nestle fuses sexual passion with political commitment and offers us images of inspiration: "when I walk the streets to protest our military bullying of Central America, or the Meese Commission on Pornography, or apartheid in South Africa and here, my breasts and hips shout their own slogans."

The theme of identity runs through *A Restricted Country*, linking Nestle's personal history to her vision of sexual and political liberation. As a woman, a working-class Jew, and a femme dyke, Nestle was made an outsider throughout her life. She recalls her fourth grade social studies teacher lecturing on the social problems caused by latchkey children, children whose mothers were not home to let them in after school. Young Joan, a key around her neck, sank shamefully into her seat, experiencing the pain of exclusion. But in that same classroom, she also expressed the spirit of rebellion. When the students were assigned essays for National Negro Week, Joan wrote one entitled "Paul Robeson: A Great American," though her teacher had called the politically outspoken actor/singer "a disgrace to this country" and had forbidden them to write about him. Nestle reflects, "If I had accepted the voice of orthodoxy in this early skirmish with McCarthy America, I would never have found the courage to claim my Lesbian life ten years later."

The book takes its title from an essay about a childhood vacation to Arizona, where the Nestles were restricted from a dude ranch because they were Jewish. As she grew older, and found herself in various "restricted countries," Nestle became sensitive to the connections between oppressions, and developed a radical sensibility. Of the time her own home became restricted — her mother demanded she see a doctor about her lesbianism or leave — Nestle

A RESTRICTED COUNTRY BY JOAN NESTLE

writes:

She kicked me out of the house and I became part of the torrent of the sixties; it was the right time for me. I could use all she had taught me, all I had witnessed: my anger at bosses, at the finger-waggers who called her whore, at the secure who flourished in streets of pain, at bigots who locked restaurants and school buildings. My queerness rode with me on Freedom Rides, walked the miles between Selma and Montgomery, helped swell the ranks of the peace marches, protested the shelter drills, sat with me in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee . . . while one of the senators called us the scum of the earth.

While the identities claimed by Nestle shaped her political commitment, she did not always reveal them to her activist friends in the '60s. In "This Huge Light of Yours," Nestle writes movingly of her civil rights work. During confrontations with police in Philadelphia and Baltimore, her friends did not know "that when the police entered, with their sneers and itchy fingers, I was meeting old antagonists. . . . In the Lesbian bars of my other world I had met these forces of the state. I never told my comrades I was different because a secret seemed a little thing in such a time in history." And during the Selma-Montgomery march, while she marched openly as a feminist and a Jew, Nestle kept her lesbianism a careful secret.

In later essays, Nestle writes about wearing "deviant" identities openly, even in the face of ostracism by supposed comrades — particularly feminists. Claiming her identity as a femme, she writes, "We lesbians from the fifties made a mistake in the early seventies: we allowed our lives to be trivialized and reinterpreted by feminists who did not share our culture." She describes her work with the Lesbian Herstory Archives (she was co-founder) to uncover the lives of lesbians of color, working-class bar dykes, prostitutes and other sex workers — "deviants" all. She also writes about the countervailing forces of censorship within the feminist anti-porn movement. Nestle's essays on this topic invoke history — her personal history of exclusion and the political history of McCarthyism and right-wing oppression. She makes us look history in the face and implores us to "Think of what is happening. Think of the times and the traditional relationship between the state and sexual minorities. Think of the tools of repression some are helping to put in place."

Nestle carries this discussion of deviance and respectability into the terrain of the AIDS epidemic. While it might be tempting for the lesbian community to isolate gay men and focus on our relative respectability, she tells us, to do so would be to deny the complexity of lesbian history (which includes, for instance, sex in public

Continued on page 8

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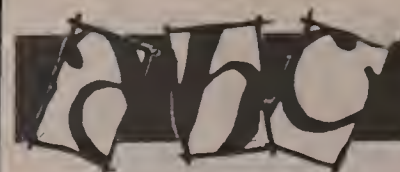
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Spender's poems and journals

A member of "the Auden circle" reveals his sense of failure

Journals 1939-1983

Stephen Spender
Edited by John Goldsmith
Random House, New York, 1986
\$19.95, 510 pp.

Collected Poems 1928-1985

Stephen Spender
Random House, New York, 1986
\$19.95, 204 pp.

Reviewed by Robin Lippincott

Stephen Spender is perhaps most widely known as a member of what is now called "the Auden circle." Named after its most illustrious and arguably most gifted member, W.H. Auden, the group also consisted of Christopher Isherwood, C. Day Lewis and Louis MacNiece. But it is the trio of Auden, Isherwood and Spender that is most often linked, as the *enfants terribles* — gay leftist-style — of English literature in the '30s.

Spender's reputation has always been overshadowed by those of Auden's and Isherwood's. In their biographical sketch of Spender, the editors of *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* offer an incisive portrait: "...Spender tends towards incertitude or even bewilderment. He is less the hierophant than the suppliant.... Spender is much harder on himself than others."

This summation best describes Spender's personality and career evidenced in these two books. His uncertainty as a poet is apparent in both the poems and the journals. In the poem "A Question of Identity," Spender writes: "Yet he never felt quite certain/Even of certainties."

Sadly, it is Spender's sense of failure as a writer that pervades the journals. In a 1979 entry, Spender is reading Virginia Woolf's letters, and records the following quote: "He [Spender] talks incessantly and will pan out in years to come a prodigious bore. But he's a nice poetic youth — big nosed, bright eyed...." Spender then writes: "Oh blessed Virginia, if you look down on me from any height where you now live, help me in my old age not to be a bore." There is something very moving and tragic about this from the then 70-year-old Spender.

In another passage, Spender likens himself to his father: "What characterized him was incomplete activities enclosed by op-

timistic rhetoric." But most revealing is an entry written in 1983, when, upon receiving a letter from Mrs. Thatcher recommending him to the Queen for a knighthood, Spender writes: "Although I've too often said I would never accept this, when I got the letter I realized at once that I would.... There are those I respect for despising such things — they are the best."

Sir Spender is no less ambiguous about his homosexuality. Married twice, most recently for 45 years to Natasha Spender, he writes — apologetically — in a "Commentary" on the first journal of 1939: "I was 20 in those days, and I was caught up mostly with the idea of friendship.... It was more like Whitman's idea of camaraderie. I admit that I do not at all feel easy about this now...." But then, beginning in 1979 and throughout the rest of the journal, is the mention of "B." — a man about whom Spender reveals very little. Yet, he has included these many entries over a four-year period in which the two spent together long — obviously romantic — periods of time.

To admire Spender is to read his matter-of-fact account of his resignation as an editor of *Encounter* after learning that it is CIA-funded. Or, to read an entry which records a walk alone through Covent Garden, where he farts, and then notices a group of students cheering him. "Suppose they knew this old man walking along and farting was Stephen Spender?" he admits to thinking.

In one of his best-known poems, Spender wrote "I think continually of those who were truly great," revealing his tendency to let the spotlight shine on others. Here, it shines most frequently on Auden, as Spender writes movingly about Auden and their friendship. He expresses conflicting feelings, but obviously revered Auden's genius and wit, recording many humorous incidents, such as Auden's remark upon first seeing Spender's baby son: "All babies look like Winston Churchill."

I heard Stephen Spender lecture in Tallahassee in 1976. Sixty-seven then, he was an arrestingly beautiful man, and gave an intelligent, eloquent talk on T.S. Eliot. I thought then, and still think, that it is as a critic and a chronicler of his times that Spender should and will be remembered. For Spender at his best, read *World Within World*, where you will find what is most valuable in the journals and poems. □

ficulty supporting the family. She drank and gambled, was ostracized by "respectable" ladies and abused by men. But she "liked to fuck" and had sex with many men: paying customers, bosses, various lovers. She taught her daughter to be conscious of class, to appreciate sex, and to survive. Nestle pays her tribute in a poem, which concludes:

Oh mama the things I saw and the things
you did.
No wonder you are a Lesbian they will
say.
No the wonder is my mother
who taught me when to go on my knees
and when not,
who kept alive her right to sexuality
when sex was killing her.

When she died, Regina Nestle left her daughter her "scribbled writings." In a deeply moving essay, "Two Women," Nestle immortalizes her mother's words and chronicles her unusual legacy. While Nestle's relationship with her mother was unique, the essay speaks to any lesbian who struggles to untangle the complexities of her relationship with her mother, to celebrate her individual identity in the face of "the medical and psychological world that [says] lesbianism is a sickness" for which our mothers are to blame. From the painful core of her own struggle for lesbian identity, Nestle's words reach out to her readers:

I ran [from my mother], driven by the doctors' threats. Some will read this and say "No wonder she is a lesbian." This is the voice I have fought my whole life. It is for the others that I write in the hope that some part of this will make it easier for us to stop running.

Nestle is both revered and condemned as a

Continued on page 10

Ebba Haslund rediscovered

The 1948 Norwegian novel was originally panned for its "perversity"

Nothing Happened

Ebba Haslund
Translated by Barbara Wilson
Seal Press, Seattle, 1987
\$7.95 paper, 134pp

Reviewed by Ann Fry

One of the newest offerings from Seal Press' "women in translation" series is Ebba Haslund's early novel, *Nothing Happened*, originally published in Norway in 1948. *Nothing Happened* is the story of 3 young women studying at the University of Oslo just prior to the outbreak of World War II. Virtually ignored by critics upon publication, the novel was panned for its "perverse" subject matter, that of the stirrings of a feminist and lesbian sensibility in the novel's storyteller, Edle Henrikson. Haslund today is one of Norway's most renowned authors and critics.

The story evolves in a familiar format as Edle flashes back on her college experiences to gain a greater understanding of her present situation. True to the title, nothing does happen. The novel is short on plot and long on description, engaging us fully in Edle's reflections on herself as a woman.

At the outset of the novel it is evident that Edle does not have an ounce of happiness in her self-imposed dreary life. A strong, independent woman who lives alone and supports herself by teaching at a local girl's school, she is incapable of seeing these qualities as strengths. In fact, readers may find it hard to cope with her almost-ceaseless flow of self-castigation for being an "unworthy" human being.

As the story unfolds, we learn (from Edle's maddeningly self-deprecating point of view) of her past happiness at the university with her two close friends, Bente and Gro. Bente, a high school friend, shows up at Edle's university home one night after fleeing her husband and infant son, explaining, "Just as I was sitting there, fighting to keep the pork down, it struck me. My god, you can leave you know." [p. 25] She moves in with Edle and decides to attend the university. This was unheard of behavior for the time and certainly a revolutionary topic for contemporary fiction. The notion that a woman could leave her husband and child to go off on her own was considered atrocious (as portrayed tragically in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, 1899). Haslund, unfortunately, is compelled to smooth things over by the end of the story, and Bente eventually returns to her husband and son. However, we also learn that Bente served as a lieutenant during the war, and was honored for her role in outwitting the Gestapo.

Gradually, Edle becomes aware of her romantic and sexual feelings for Gro, the third member of the trio of friends. She is jealous when Gro speaks of her boyfriend back home, yet admonishes herself for having such feelings. For a while she becomes involved with Hans Jorgen, a fellow stu-

Mop

Continued from page 2

perience of standing up to management. "When the girls get mad it's wonderful, isn't it?" said a hotel worker participating in the Dec. 4 rally, who declined to give her name. Glancing at the varied group of demonstrators, she added, "I knew there was a women's movement in Boston."

She further explained that she doesn't consider "maid" a valid job title and that workers prefer to be known as room attendants.

Janice Loux, vice president of Local 26, expressed pleasure that interest in the case of the Copley Plaza workers "took off like wildfire." Loux, who also works with the Coalition of Labor Union Women, a city-wide group that works to keep women's issues in the forefront of labor politics, said "The beauty of the rally was that it demonstrated the outrage of working women in Boston. The issue was the demeaning message passed down to the hotel workers, which really pissed people off."

NOTHING
HAPPENED
E. b b a H a s l u n d
Translated by Barbara Wilson



Illustration by Sigrid Hjerten from book jacket

dent, and feels pride in the safety of meeting societal expectations. This does not last long, however. In describing the relationship she says:

Yes. I remember that. Clearly. Surely it must be proof of my sexual normality that I could feel this purely physical attraction to a man. Even if it was only once. I remember that afterwards I longed to feel it again. But I never did. [p.84]

By the end of the novel, Edle reconciles herself to her feelings for Gro after years of suppressing them as hopeless and unnatural. Slowly she comes to see her love for Gro (who has since been killed working for the Resistance during the war) as a positive feeling. After pages and pages of negative self-references, (and homophobic rationalizations) we are given hope that Edle may flourish in her new found self-acceptance when she says:

"...It was Gro I loved, Gro who meant something to me. But naturally I couldn't admit it. What I felt had to be directed towards a legitimate channel. As if there's nothing but purely sexual love! As if love, whatever guise it takes — love for another person — can ever be shameful or ugly. I think now I can finally finish. With the old things. So I can go on. [p. 116]

Haslund has something of a groundbreaking novel here in her characterizations of all three women as independent individuals in a world geared toward fulfilling patriarchal expectations. Although Edle's homophobic self-loathing is difficult to get through at times, it is gratifying to see her portrayed by Haslund as working through these feelings without opting for one of two favorite literary solutions of the time: suicide or insanity. Whether or not Edle will "go on" as a lesbian, however, (the word is never used by Haslund) is left to us to decide. □

She added that the flood of anger over the no-mop rule was a strong sign that issues of working conditions remain of key importance in labor struggles. Loux blasted management executive Alan Tremain for his silence during the controversy. Tremain is president of Hotels of Distinction, which operates the Copley Plaza for its owner, the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company.

President of Local 26, Dominic Bozzotto was equally condemning of management. Responding to Tremain's statement to the press that "A maid is a maid, and that's just what she has to do," Bozzotto said, "Tremain just reeks with arrogance. Hancock also said they couldn't do anything. But they're worried about fires, health hazards for their guests...why don't they care about their employees?"

Bozzotto said he was pleased at the broad representation of workers at the demonstration. Prior to Copley Plaza's rescinding of the no-mop rule, Local 26 had filed a grievance claiming that the move reversed a 20-year policy of allowing room attendants

Continued on page 9

Gritty love

Controversy builds over violence between lesbian characters in Margaret Erhart's *Unusual Company*

Unusual Company
Margaret Erhart
E.P. Dutton, NY 1987
\$17.95 cloth, 225pp

Reviewed by Elizabeth Pincus

The most oddly macabre image in Margaret Erhart's *Unusual Company* is that of an unwieldy papier-mache teapot worn worn by Claire while she moonlights as a walking advertisement for a Manhattan coffee shop. She loves her job lumbering down Midtown streets in her costume, peaking though tiny eye-holes, traversing a route that includes the sight of mottled pink and purple plastic hams hanging in a deli window. Claire even wears her outfit on the subway, maneuvering an arm awkwardly through a chicken-wire spout.

One day, Claire's lover Franny attempts to kiss her goodbye through all the mesh and plaster. Feeling removed and strangely jealous, Franny surreptitiously follows Claire on her route, sadly touched by the gawky, bird-like effect of the costume. In a flash Franny understands Claire's affection for the job: "... her teapot was her solitude, a sort of high loneliness that she told herself she needed and loved."

While ostensibly a novel of first love and loss, *Unusual Company* may more fittingly be described as a tale of estrangement, of wary and mistimed passion. The strength of the book, a first novel by New York writer and educator Erhart, lies in its haunting evocation of oddity and deceit. *Unusual Company* is sinister from the get-go, blending evil and eroticism with a seaminess that renders the characters cold and not particularly likable. They thrive on voyeurism. The book evokes a psychological edge of danger more reminiscent of the crime novels of Cornell Woolrich or Ruth Rendell than the stuff of standard lesbiana.

Unusual Company has garnered some early censure from the feminist literary community for alleged portrayals of abuse and homophobia. The October issue of *Feminist Bookstore News* particularly slams the book for its "overlay of male and heterosexual imagery onto lesbian experience." Suspicion seems to surround the motives of publisher E.P. Dutton, a mainstream house now launching a new series of lesbian-themed novels. Dutton stands by *Unusual Company* on its literary merit. But some critics cannot excuse what they have called the uncritical inclusion of violence between the lesbian characters.

Says Claire to Franny very soon after they meet, "I'll kill you if you go away." No tender love, this. Though for 22-year-old Franny, in the midst of her first sexual affair, the older Claire represents an alluring wisdom and quirkiness. They become drawn into a mutual obsession. Erhart tells the story through Franny's gaze, conveying the awe of first intimacy with a voice first jumpy, then silky smooth. After one early moment in their courtship, Franny expresses, "That night I could feel my beauty standing up inside me for the first time in my life." These heightened scenes of discovery are offered smack amidst moods of vicious aggression and unresolvable separation, keeping *Unusual Company* rich with subtle twists.

Such inconsistency makes for a fully engaging read. Claire and Franny may be too aloof for sympathy, but they move in a creepy, surrealistic world that disturbs while it captivates. Erhart has crafted a flowing, highly textured novel through seamless writing and the skillful use of repeated imagery. Besides recurring teapots and teacups, which conjure up fragility, civility and the lack thereof, *Unusual Company* is rife with animals, both domesticated and otherwise. Franny tells Claire about her first encounter with sexuality, a childhood glimpse of two frenzied dogs copulating. Now she works in a Manhattan pet shop. Throughout the novel, more scenes with animals — especially fish — evoke a world of unleashed danger. Also repeated are images of damaged arms, often swimming against the resistance of water or air. Nothing remains ordered in Erhart's world; in keeping, Franny and Claire part mid-way through the novel.

Unfortunately, *Unusual Company* loses its punch at this point. This tale of a very unordinary urban liaison turns almost



Book jacket design by Nancy Etheredge

clichéd, with Claire departing (without explanation) for an ashram in the South Pacific. Franny flees to California to ease her broken heart and discovers a lesbian community, her cervix, nautilus shells and the ocean's warring strength — all surprisingly typical fare in a novel so otherwise perverse. It also accelerates in pace so haphazardly that actions unfold without reason.

For example, after a hasty move to Santa Fe, Franny takes on photography, barriocruising and a new lover with an absurd degree of casualness. Despite Franny's initial disdain for "angry feminists and big political dykes," the new lover is an electrician named BT who embodies a whole decade of '70s lesbian stereotypes. Franny begins to lose her fixation on Claire as the years fly by. Erhart keeps mentioning Franny's advancing age, implying that the eight-year gap between the women fades in significance as Franny nears 30 — Claire's age when they first met. (In fact, the older/younger woman theme feels barely relevant throughout the whole story.)

Finally, Claire returns from her spiritual stint to seek out Franny in Santa Fe. In a climactic scene far too eager for resolution, the women talk about non-monogamy, slow dance together and fall into bed. Rather than continuing the loving, if sometimes hostile, eroticism of their earlier days, this last encounter is straight-forward sexual brutalization of Claire by Franny. If *Unusual Company* means to show, as one book-jacket blurb asserts, that Franny ascends to "womanhood, independence and the ability to love," then Erhart falls wildly off track at the book's closing.

This novel may elicit wildly varying responses from readers. It may also fuel debate over issues of censorship, "appropriate" content and the portrayal of lesbians in fiction. For readers seeking a novel that at least strives to veer far from conventionality, *Unusual Company* may satisfy. To a point. □

Mop

Continued from page 8

to clean by the most appropriate methods. Bozzotto was also urging boycott of the hotel and would have advocated a strike if necessary. "This is a real issue," he said. "We don't have a short attention span. We want assurances against retribution, and we'll be back demonstrating in larger numbers if we have to."

According to Bozzotto, the demeaning no-mop regulation is an example of racist attitudes on the part of the Copley Plaza and other exclusive hotels. The Copley Plaza is one of nine major hotels in Greater Boston noted by a civil rights group for negligence in hiring and promoting people of color to supervisory and management positions. The group, Minority Opportunity and Representation in Employment (MORE), has been pressuring city hotels to disclose employment figures. Bozzotto, who supports MORE, echoed the assertion that hotels steer people of color into low-paying,

Continued on page 10

Ned Rorem's Nantucket diary

Extending the chronical of a gay U.S. composer

The Nantucket Diary of Ned Rorem 1973-1985
Ned Rorem
North Point Press, 1987
\$30.00 634 pp. (plus 16pp. photographs)

Reviewed by Donald Stone

With this volume Rorem extends a chronicle begun in 1966 with *The Paris Diary of Ned Rorem* (followed by *The New York Diary* and *The Final Diary*, all reissued by North Point Press in 1983.) Like its predecessors, *The Nantucket Diary* portrays the thoughts and activities of an openly gay man who is also one of America's most distinguished composers and a caustic observer of the rich and famous. But now the earlier drama of alcoholism has passed — although its specter never disappears entirely — giving way to a new drama: the advent of AIDS. Rorem loses cherished faces from his circle and must reflect on his own sexual activity. These facts notwithstanding, the reader should understand that the text does not constitute a traditional autobiography.

Rorem works a particularly difficult genre. The bits and pieces of life that the diarist records do not make a narrative. They can be offered in very abbreviated form: "I told her we'd met before ... at Virgil's." (After all, there is no need to explain to the self who Virgil is.) But since the reader eventually realizes that the name refers to Virgil Thompson, the risk of creating an impression of elitist name-dropping is ever-present. Similarly, if the diarist chooses to write a sustained reflection on some particular subject, wax sententious or witty, how to convince the reader that these moments were written for the self and not for posterity? Rorem says enough here to reveal that he knows there are no solutions to these difficulties. He simply perseveres and lets the snide comments fall where they may. At the same time, like every conscious artist, he exploits the givens of the genre he is using.

We feel all the more intensely the specialness of Rorem's relationship with his lover James Holmes for the irregular, unpredictable way in which it surfaces in the text. By creating the impression of a bond that is often diluted and even overshadowed by the minutiae of daily life, yet suddenly a dominant concern, Rorem's diary reflects so well that curious way in which our activities rarely mirror our values. And one could say as much about Rorem's remarks on Wallace the cat, whose quiet company and painful death lend perspective to the human comedy of a celebrity's existence.

Far more central to Rorem's exploitation of the diary form, however, is his indulgence in critical reflection. Permitted by the genre to speak his mind directly, Rorem advances observation after observation on literature, language, social behavior, but above all, music and homosexuality. Some judgments state blunt personal preferences which each reader will have to weigh, accept or discard. Other remarks seem calculated to raise the reader's consciousness.

Consider, for example, this aperçu about public expectations regarding artists' writings. "When *The Paris Diary* came out, Harold Acton, who loathed it, asked: 'What have such horrors as crabs, piles, and bedbugs to do with musical inspiration and "the crushing necessity to be an artist"?' How should I know? I'm the artist, he's the esthete." And more than once Rorem decries our fascination with performers in counterdistinction to the modest interest paid to those who write the music performed. ("While Rubenstein's obit rated a big picture on page 1, Barber's rated a small picture on page 30.")

To be sure, such remarks could be called self-serving. However, in one of the more revealing passages of the volume, Rorem chooses to focus the reader's attention on self-knowledge. He asks himself a set of questions: "Why do I write all this? Why persist? For whom? It's not particularly unusual." Then he answers his own questions: "I write it all because I know who I am, and that is unusual." Rorem's remarks might appear to refer to the self-awareness that comes from every gay man's inevitable

confrontation with his being and yet, in truth, he seems determined to avoid this connection.

His various statements about homosexuality insist, rather, on distinguishing between the group and the individual and on giving priority to the latter:

A tenor, organizing a program around gay themes by gay composers, wonders if I will contribute. Certainly not. I'm a composer, not a gay composer. Sexuality may relate to an artist's becoming an artist but not to his becoming a good artist. I want to be loved or hated, not for my nature, but for the quality of my nature. Anyone can be gay — it's no accomplishment — but only I can be me. [...] Black Pride and Gay Pride are dangerous slogans, like White Pride or Straight Pride.... One must not be ashamed but that's not the same as being proud. Pride should lie in what one does with one's blackness or gayness.

For many these will be fighting words. By accentuating accomplishment over nature, Rorem appears to set in motion the argument that people must be admired, respected, and, possibly, protected and enfranchised not because of basic human rights, but only after a review of their credentials. I say "appears to set in motion" since nothing in the volume suggests that

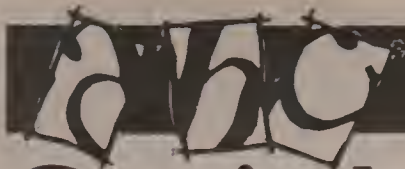


Ned Rorem

Rorem intended his remarks to be read in this way. The discussion reflects far more the ancient distinction between social condition and inner worth, between all-embracing labels and personal identity. Echoing antiquity and Renaissance humanists alike, Rorem means to argue that the givens of a person's nature (including sexual preference) must not be allowed, in themselves, to determine how the individual is judged.

And yet, in its way, the book gives the lie to the notion that the general is best kept well separate from the specific. The more the diary form forces us to contemplate the quality of the ubiquitous "I" that is speaking, the more we watch Rorem's self-awareness move outward toward others, until it rejoins, willy-nilly, the political sphere and, in the true fashion of an aroused minority, attacks unfairness wherever it occurs. Indeed, the two examples already cited of Rorem's quarrels with critics and the public only open the door onto far testier battles waged with the music profession and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

With its frequent use of foreign languages, its parade of names and titles, and portrait of a rarefied world most of us will never know, *The Nantucket Diary* may be dismissed out of hand by many readers. For the undaunted, the rewards are real, including the portrait of one gay man in whom the courage to be out seems to have brought in its wake a willingness to be out-spoken and outrageous as well. □



Gay in Vietnam

Tim Barrus confronts the war and his sexuality

Anywhere, Anywhere

Tim Barrus
Knights Press, Stamford, CT, 1987
\$7.95, paper, 239 pp

Reviewed by Bill Healy

Of the recent books that have been published on the war in Vietnam, this is the first, to my knowledge, that is written from the perspective of a gay Vietnam vet. The author recounts his experiences as the platoon leader of a group of "tunnel rats." As such, they were responsible for flushing the "enemy" out of the intricate system of tunnels constructed by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. This was certainly one of the most dangerous and terrifying assignments of the war. The combat segments are contrasted with the experiences of the men once they had returned home.

In the States, the focus is on the relationship between the author and Chris, one of the tunnel rats and now the author's lover. Chris is confined to a wheelchair because of injuries sustained in Vietnam. These episodes shift from the VA Hospital in New York City, where they both spend some time for psychiatric and physical rehabilitation — to their Greenwich Village apartment with its scenes of sexual intimacy, and briefly, to Lansing, Michigan, where Chris confronts his family with his homosexuality.

Unlike recent films such as *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*, which center on the dehumanizing aspects of lethal combat, the war caused author Tim Barrus to confront his own sexuality and humanity. One of the more significant moments occurs when the narrator happens upon two soldiers making love in a trench. His reaction is one of identification with the soldiers and an understanding of the male bonding (not necessarily gay) which takes place in extreme situations. It is a turning point. He begins to come to grips with the fact that he is gay, although in 'Nam he doesn't transcend the stage of male bonding. The explicit recognition of his sexuality will occur after the war, when he meets Chris in the hospital and they become lovers.

The major theme of the scenes in the U.S.

is the author's readjustment to American society. He expects to find support and understanding within the gay community, to recapture the feelings of male bonding experienced during the war. This is not the case. The author is embittered by the indifferent attitude he encounters in the gay community, the unwillingness to discuss the war. Later, when he goes to the bars with Chris, they meet open hostility. They are asked to leave because the presence of Chris in a wheelchair is upsetting to the other patrons. This kind of insensitivity serves as a vivid reminder that, the gay subculture reacted to the war with the same avoidance and denial expressed by straight society.

The book contains some serious flaws. The movie scenario structure, with its constant time shifts, becomes confusing. From the events described in Vietnam, the author's tour of duty must have lasted seven years. While the use of quotes from the songs of the period is, at first, quite effective in indicating his inability to forget the war — an all-consuming obsession that has marked his life forever — the constant use of this device becomes intrusive, even annoying. (In a film, of course, this technique would provide a ready-made soundtrack.) Other than the narrator and Chris, the characters we meet in the novel tend to fall into stereotypes. Larger issues, such as the general public's reaction to the war, are dealt with summarily. In the one scene that treats this problem — a confrontation between Chris and friends of his father in a Lansing bar — the men are redneck caricatures. The trip to New Mexico at the close of the novel where the protagonists will join a former army buddy in caring for Vietnamese orphans can be seen as an affirmation of their compassion and humanity. But it has the hollow ring of a Paramount ending.

Despite these weaknesses, the book is worthwhile reading. It should serve to heighten sensitivity within the gay community to the particular dilemma of the Vietnam vet who has been forced to live on the edge, not only of straight society but also of the gay community. □

world between our legs, and reach now for me who has changed her form. I hear my elders, scarred and knowing, laughing kindly, saying to me, Come on girl. We welcome you.

Having a sense of history can sometimes make living in the present difficult. As I muddle through the era of "post-feminism," I feel a sense of vicarious nostalgia when my older friends regale me with tales of the explosive early days of the women's movement. And when I think about the physical, emotional, social, and political toll AIDS has taken on the gay community, I wish I could turn the clock back a decade. Yet having a history means queers can look to our heritage to find role models, to learn strategies, and to build pride as we face old and new assaults on our lives. And maybe as we learn to accept our heritage in all its deviant diversity, we can begin to respect differences within our own communities. For as Joan Nestle writes, "Every present becomes a past, but caring enough to listen will keep us all alive." □

Mop

Continued from page 9

low-profile jobs. He criticized hotels — often controlled by banks and insurance companies — for not challenging such discriminatory practices.

At the Dec. 4 rally, Barbara Neely presented a box of rags wrapped in holiday paper to a Copley Plaza manager. It was intended for Tremain, but he did not appear at the protest. Backed by cheering demonstrators, Neely reiterated statements of solidarity among working women and their supporters over the Copley Plaza incident. "Pass the message on," Neely said. "We're together on this, and we'll be watching." □

Nestle

Continued from page 8

"sex radical." Yet her treatment of sexuality in these essays and erotic pieces bridges a gap between the views of those who tell us women are victims of our sexuality without the possibility of experiencing genuine pleasure, and those who offer the simple equation that sexual expression equals liberation, without addressing why sexuality is shrouded in shame, pain and fear for many women. Nestle offers a richly complex picture of sexuality, describing the pleasure of kissing and the exhilaration of fucking, but also reflecting on the times she could not come, the moments when she felt ashamed of her large, fleshy body.

Nestle infuses her erotica with her own vulnerability as she shamelessly celebrates sexual passion:

Her hands are hard on me, and I want them to be. I hear her breath coming quicker and my own moaning breaking the silence. Her hands knead my belly, pushing my breath in and out. My hips move, I want her all inside of me. She pulls me back. For a brief moment I open my eyes. I can smell my sex in the room. "Your body is bursting with want."

"I know." I can see it, hear it, smell it. My body is covered with a dark flush, and I am moving with want. I want to scream out to her, "Now, please take me now," but I can't, even in this dream. Perhaps next time I will be able to scream. I want to. I need to. For so many years I have not screamed, for so many years the world was not safe enough, or there was no one there to hear it.

Nestle offers us no easy answers to tough sexual questions, but her experiences encourage us to accept shifting desires. In "A Change of Life," she writes of taking on the role of butch at age 45. Her personal change takes root in the continuity of her lesbian heritage:

Reach my love for all my hands can give, and I will give you more. Reach for all of us who began in our desire to grip the

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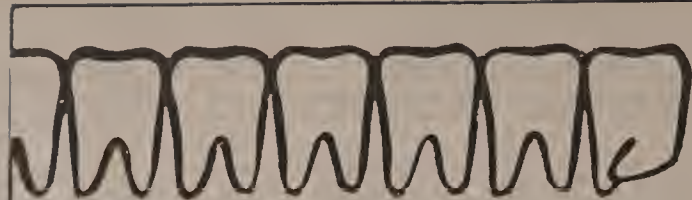
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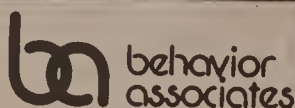
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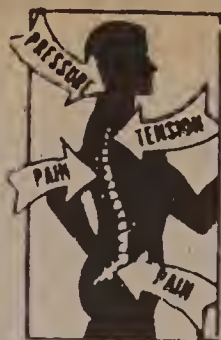
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3 LF's and cat seek LF 27+ for spacious 4 bedroom house with yard, Inman Sq. Somerville. Non-smoker wanted for semi-coop, politically progressive, independent household. 876-6189. (22)

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LF 29, writer/editor, seeks F25+ for gorgeous 6 room apartment. 10 minutes to Harvard Sq. No smoke no pets. Wood floors, fireplace, sunny, quiet. \$325+ reasonable heat. Short term possible 924-5172. (22)

Masculine GM30 musician, Mass native looking for 1/2 friendly, considerate, roommates and comfortable, relaxed home, longterm, w/parking. 128/495 area, may consider, NH/VT/RI. Call Ian before 10pm, 789-4001. (22)

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3 easy-going, responsible, LF's seek 4th for our lovely home in Dorchester. 2 floors (hardwood), backyard, w/d. No more pets-sorry. Avail Jan 1. Near Red line. \$200 plus. 436-2752. (22)

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3 LF seek 1 more for 4 bedroom apt in JP. We're fun, veggie, coop. Have cat. Pets okay. Non-smoking, min. drinking, drugs. \$213+. Avail Jan 1. Rachel or Wendy 522-9351. (22)

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JP GF 29 seeks same 25+. 1 or 2 rooms \$350/\$400 negotiable incl HtHW. Have cat, no more pets. Prfr nonsmr, indep, resp, perm/temp. Rochelle 524-0754. (22)

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We meet for support & networking and welcome contact from other Jewish Lesbian Daughters of Holocaust Survivors. The next meeting is scheduled for April 22nd-24th, in upstate New Hampshire, and semi-annually thereafter. A partners group has also been formed for lesbian women who are in relationship with JLDHS. Membership is not dependent on both partners. For information, write Box 6194, Boston, MA 02114 or call (617) 321-4254. (15.49)

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BLACK/OUT

The new quarterly magazine from the National coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, features news, views, reviews, poetry, short fiction and announcements of interest to the national Black Lesbian and Gay community. Sample copy, \$4, 1 yr. subscription, (4 issues) \$10. To: Black/Out, NCBLG, P.O. Box 2490, Washington, DC 20013. (ex)

GUARDIAN: Independent radical newsweekly. Covers Gay, women and minority struggles and international progressive movements. Special offer-4 issues FREE. Write Guardian, Dept GCN, 33W 17th St. NY, NY, 10011. (ex)

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Prisoners Seeking Friends



TO ALL THOSE, IN & OUT OF PRISON, WHO FIGHT AGAINST THEIR BONDAGE. Alexander Berkman, — Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist

GCN PRISONERS & AIDS PROJECT

Since we only have a limited amount of free space in GCN for prisoners, we would like to put together a separate, xeroxed sheet or two (monthly?) with legal/medical information of special interest to PWAs and others affected by the fact of AIDS, especially prisoners.

We would also like to have some penpal ads on this sheet so that we can put PWAs/PWARCs and people who have tested HIV positive (treated very similarly in prison) inside and outside in touch with each other.

This sheet would only be sent to those who specially request it, to avoid having the names of PWAs in prison exposed to all who see the paper, and to not take up too much of our regular penpal space. If you would like to be included in this mailing, send your name and penpal ad to GCN PWA Project.

This project is just getting started so please be patient. The first sheet may not be ready for a month or two, depending on what kind of labor power and \$\$ we can get together for it.

Gay Prisoners & Protective Custody

Write GCN Prisoner Project, 62 Berkeley, Boston MA 02116, for a copy of the legal issues & cases on getting into PC (if you want), and on getting out of PC (or Ad Seg or whatever they're calling it where you are).

One of GCN's long-time prisoner friends and a source of much Jailhouse Lawyer help is in need of an old tenor sax (Selman or Conn?). If someone out there has any ideas (or a tenor in the attic!) please let Mike know at GCN. THANKX!

COALITION FOR PRISONERS RIGHTS

Newsletter is available for FREE to prisoners. \$5 donation requested from non-prisoners. Info on prison conditions. Good political info. They are volunteers and not able to be penpals or answer all letters, but they will try to publish your short statement of conditions where you are. Write them at CPR, Box 1911, Santa Fe, NM 87504.



I'm in a medium security place here in Canada. I'm moving to Hamilton, Ontario when I get out and will be opening my very own little upholstery shop and I want to hire a few of the girls who are interested. I can teach them all I know about the upholstery business, which I love. Once I have gotten my little shop off the ground, I'm thinking of opening a trailer park for transsexuals and transvestites nearby as there is no place for the girls to go, to relax and just be them selves. Please drop a line if you're interested. Karl Rowlee, Medium Security Prison, Box 760, Campbellford, Ontario, Canada. [22¢ stamp is also OK for Canada].

Seeking gay-bisexual friends for correspondence, inside or out. Not looking for material things, just friendship. Earl BATTLES, P-7516 (S-1-RHU), Drawer K, Dallas PA 18612.

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Single attractive female, lonely, in need of some friendship. Please write. Cindy WILSON, 203 Rocky Hill Rd, Northampton, MA 01060.

I'm 33 years old, very masculine looking, been gay all my life time, interested in a lady with class, for a friend. Ruby JOHNSON, F02516, PO Box 8540, Pembroke Pines FL 33024

I'm a post-op transsexual doing time at the Nevada Women's Correctional Center. Would like to hear from some special man to add a little sunshine to my life. I'm smart, fun, full of life and easy on the eyes. Linda HUGHES, Box 7000, Carson City NV 89702.



HOLIDAY BLUES (AGAIN)

Whatever your feelings about the holidays, it's an extremely lonely time for prisoners, especially if they aren't near friends (which most aren't). So please consider sending a note of 'cheer' to some of the people listed in the penpal space, even if you don't intend to be a penpal. (If you don't, mention that you just want to send a note of 'community solidarity' (or whatever) in these "hard times". (thanks)

Long eyelashes, no body hair, nice round bubble butt. Let me make your dreams cum-Cum-CUM true! Send SASE for fast reply. Matthew MILLER, 198-480, Box 740, London OH 43140
Yes, I still get the GCN paper and I really enjoy the news. Please keep it coming! I am lonely too and would like to hear from someone outside of this prison system. Kim MARK, 206094, Box 316, Ft Madison IA 52627.

Time is so much easier to do when you have someone to write to. I'm having some trouble in here because I'm gay and look it and all they think about here is sex and property.Olinn SINGLETARY, A-071505, 1150 SW Allapattah Rd, Indiantown FL 34956. (Box 405)

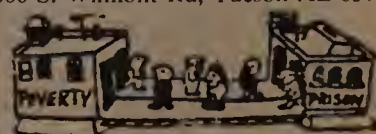


I'm looking to be penpals with someone who is a patient, honest and caring person. I've had enough of false 'friendships'. I'm a romantic, faithful, hardworking, flexible, a bit shy, but loving and imaginative. I'm lonely as hell too, so please write. Michael CRAY, 30 Administration Rd (B-2), Bridgewater MA 02324.

I need to hear about my rights as a gay prisoner (I'm in the 'hole' just now) and if you would, please put my name in the penpal column. I get into art a lot and a lot of people tell me I'm handsome. Clarence BROWN, 43542, Box 200, Camp Hill, PA 17011.

I'm a female impersonator, love to write, dance and love sex with a mature butch male. Looking for a penpal. Larry SHEELY, 095468, 1150 SW Allapattah Rd, Indiantown, FL 34956.

Gay artist wishes to write anyone interested in gay art. Would love to exchange photos and ideas. Write to David PALMER, 38308 Rincon, 10,000 S. Wilmont Rd, Tucson AZ 85777.



Calendar

12 SATURDAY TO
20 SUNDAY

20 Sunday ☐ Ten Percent Revue in a special benefit for GCN. Club Cabaret, 209 Columbus Ave., Boston. 7:30pm. \$15. Tickets: 536-0972.

12 Saturday

Boston ☐ **Lifeline**, Washington DC's high energy political rock band of women. Somewhere Else, 295 Franklin St. 9 and 10:30pm. \$3. Info: 423-7730.

Boston ☐ **Sixth Annual Community Recognition Dinner** sponsored by Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance. China Pearl Restaurant at 9 Tyler St. \$25, low-income tix available. Info: 227-3030.

Boston ☐ **Gay Father's 6th Annual Christmas Party**. 6 Hamilton Pl., 3rd floor. Info: 742-7897.

Tewksbury ☐ **Gaylaxian Science Fiction Society** monthly general meeting at 3pm. Info: write P.O. Box 1051, Back Bay Annex, Boston, MA 02117.

Worcester ☐ **Mary Daly** reads and signs her new release, **Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language**. Anonymous, 22 Front St. 3-4pm. Info: 752-8821.

Amherst — **Dignilife**, a non-profit AIDS education group, holds benefit dance at the Red Barn, Hampshire College, off Rt. 116 in coordination with Hampshire Gay Men's Alliance. 9:30pm. Wheelchair accessible, alcohol and chem free.

Boston ☐ **Girth and Mirth of New England Holiday Party** at Hill House, 74 Joy St. 8-10pm. Info: Len-ny, 389-5635.

Cambridge ☐ **Heather Bishop and Fred Small** in concert at Paine Hall, Harvard. 8pm. \$12 ASL interp. Info: TDD 492-0935, Voice 661-1252.

13 Sunday

Jamaica Plain ☐ **Freedom Trail Band Holiday concert**. Unitarian Church of Jamaica Plain, Eliot and Centre Sts. Potluck at 4pm; concert at 5:30pm. Free, donations welcome.

Boston ☐ **Fred Mandel**, former head of the Human Rights Commission, speaks about what goes on behind the scenes at City Hall. "Boston's Other Voice" WROR, 98.5 FM, 12:30am, (Monday morning).

Brighton ☐ **Daughters of Bilitis singles' potluck** brunch at noon. Info: Jean, 277-8150.

Worcester ☐ **Eve Rifkah and Esther Heggie** poetry book reception. Grove Gallery. 100 Grove St. 1-6pm. Info: 867-6147.

Cambridge ☐ **Seventh annual women's craft market** at 186 Hampshire St. (Also Dec. 12/19-24. Hours: Sats. and 12/21-23 11am-5pm, Sun. 12-5pm, 12/24 11am-3pm). Free admission. Info: 324-6822.

Boston ☐ **Women's Jazz Cabaret** at Villa Victoria, 85 West Newton. 7:30pm. \$6 advance/\$8 door. Info: 397-8311.

Boston ☐ **Gay Men's Chorus** in concert at Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory. 3pm. \$8 and \$12. Info: 536-2412.

Jamaica Plain ☐ **Lesbian and Gay Neighbors holiday potluck**. First Church Unitarian, Eliot and Centre Sts. 4-7pm. Freedom Trail Band plays at 5:30pm. All community groups invited. Bring a dish to share and non-alcoholic beverage. Info: 522-3894.

Brookline ☐ **Am Tikva long term planning meeting**. 1762 Beacon St. 12:45-5:30pm. Info: 782-8894.

Boston ☐ **Gay Professional Women sponsor holiday party** at Children's Museum, 7-11pm. Dancing, cash bar. Free to members, guests \$14. Info: 585-6051.

14 Monday

Jamaica Plain ☐ **New works of fiction read by Women Fire Writers**, from a workshop led by Andrea Lowenstein. Old Fire House, 657 Centre St. 7:30pm. Free, refreshments served, wheelchair accessible. Info: 524-3816.

15 Tuesday

Cambridge ☐ **She Must Be Seeing Things**, Sheila McLaughlin's lesbian film back by popular demand at the Brattle Theater. 8pm. \$5.

16 Tuesday

Boston ☐ **MASS ACT-OUT** a coalition of people addressing the concerns of lesbians and gays. Meeting, Room 801, Boston City Hall, 7:30pm. Info: 661-7737.

Cambridge ☐ **Adrienne Rich**, a taped reading from Sojourner benefit in September on "Say it, Sister!" WMBR 88.1 FM. 7-8pm.

Cambridge ☐ **Lesbians 50 older/younger meet**. DOB, Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 8pm. \$1. Info: 661-3633.

Boston ☐ **NAMES Project** (New England Chapter) meeting. Piemonte Rm. at City Hall. 7pm. Open to anyone interested in coordinating visit of AIDS quilt to Boston in summer '88. Info: Dave Waight, 323-9747.

19 Saturday

Cambridge ☐ **Coming out as bisexual**, a discussion and role-playing workshop for women only. Sponsored by the Boston Bisexual Women's Network. Women's Center. 46 Pleasant St. 11am-2pm. Pre-registration required. Info: 247-6083.

Boston ☐ **Prime Timers Christmas Party**. Bring a gift and take one home. Older gay men invited. Playland upstairs, 21 Essex St. 1:30-4pm. Info: write Box 352, Reading, MA 01867.

Boston ☐ **Am Tikva's "Shabbat Sing."** Great fun, learn new melodies, no special singing ability required. All welcome. Info: Priscilla, 327-1404.

20 Sunday

Brookline ☐ **Am Tikva's Hanukkah party/folklore celebration**. Bring Hanukkah stories and menorahs/dreidles. Workmen's Circle, 1762 Beacon St. 4pm. Small donation requested. Info: 782-8894.

Boston ☐ **Bridges**, a multi-cultural non-religious service of remembrance and renewal for all people whose lives have been touched by AIDS. Faneuil Hall. 3pm. Wheelchair accessible, interpreted for the hearing impaired. Info: 437-6200 x 220.

Boston ☐ **Gay community caroling** on Beacon Hill. Meet at Arlington St. Church at 7pm. Caroling plus desserts, hot chocolate etc. Info: Jim, 437-5870.

Boston ☐ **Ten Percent Revue** in a special benefit for **Gay Community News**. Hear how to be a "Safe Sex Slut" and have a "Turkey Baster Baby" in Tom Wilson Weinberg's musical celebration of lesbian and gay life and love. Club Cabaret at the Club Cafe, 209 Columbus Ave. 7:30pm. \$15. Wheelchair accessible. Tickets: 536-0972. (Regular run through Dec. 27.)

NATIONAL CALENDAR

January 30 ☐ **Boston** ☐ **"Children in our lives,"** a conference for all women about lesbians, children and our communities. U.Mass Harbor Campus. 9am-5pm. \$18/more if, less if. Includes childcare and lunch. Wheelchair accessible. Pre-registration recommended, by Dec. 22 for childcare and/or ASL interpretation. Co-sponsored by the Cambridge Women's Center and the Lesbian and Gay Center and Women's Center at U. Mass. Boston. Info: (617) 354-8807.

January 31 ☐ **Sunnyside, NY** ☐ **AIDS Moon Web**, a ritual by witches and pagans focusing on destroying barriers and increasing positive elements to help in overcoming AIDS. Info: write Kathexis, Box 4538, Sunnyside, NY 11104-4538.

CALENDAR COMPILED BY
STEPHANIE POGGI



12 Saturday ☐ Lifeline performs at Somewhere Else.

Is your finger aching, I can feel you hesitating, Is your finger aching? Is your finger aching?

— the Au Pairs

What does sex mean to me?

What does sex mean to society?

— Human Sexual Response

“So you wanna be a rock ’n roll star?!” screams the centerspread of a scruffy rag produced by the Boston activist group Rock Against Sexism (R.A.S.). Amid a jumbled collage picturing shaggy-headed, bare-chested, “fuckin’ awesome” white guy rockers, photo captions tell us how to succeed at rock ’n roll:

- *learn how to smirk, jeer and leer
- *be white
- *look androgynous but hate queers
- *call attention to your crotch as often as possible
- *perpetuate the sexist, racist status quo while posing as a rebel

R.A.S. states that they want to smash these time-renowned standards of rock stardom. They want to try to promote music and a club milieu that welcomes women, lesbians, gay men, people of color, people of all ages and income levels. Arguing that rock music calls for more than just nihilism and disorder, R.A.S. also pushes for social change within the music business. While emphasizing the connection between alternative music and rebellion, R.A.S. promotes a kind of rebellion which includes ongoing political analysis of sexism and racism.

R.A.S. also wants their music loud, contemporary, sometimes raunchy. In keeping, they publish a fanzine-like newsletter that melds raw, overly-dense visuals with angst-ridden poetry and political prose. Each issue contains the R.A.S. Banner of Intent that spells out their goals, including the attempt to “network with and unify the diverse political and musical groups in Boston.”

R.A.S. throws monthly tea dance/disc parties at the 1270 club, holds workshops especially for women to demystify the technical aspects of making music (called “c.R.A.S.h” courses) and sponsors musical

jams for women rockers. Also in the works are an outreach program for high school students and the launching of an R.A.S.-deejayed radio show.

“We offer an alternative to offensive music,” said Pam Nicholas, R.A.S. member. “It’s not all heavy duty political stuff, but it’s always non-sexist. We’re interested in small and independent record labels, and we really want to promote bands with women in them.”

A bevy of women’s bands emerged within the last ten years which crop up often on R.A.S.’s playlist. Some of the members’ favorites are now defunct — like the Contractions and the Bloods — though newer and younger groups keep the playlist expanding. Nicholas cited a handful of non-sexist bands with fresh energy, including Boston’s Gut Bank, Fright Wig from California, the southern Mydolls, the Tete Noires from Minneapolis and Canada’s Mecca Normal,

who Nicholas described as offering overtly political lyrics. R.A.S. member Mary Ann Peacott named a few more Boston bands that command her respect: Sally’s Dream, Salem 66, Vasco da Gama.

Both Peacott and Nicholas expressed frustration, however, that there seem to be fewer hardcore women rockers now compared to recent years. “There just aren’t as many political bands around anymore,” Nicholas said. “There are lots of young hardcore boys, though, who may profess to be anti-war, but might beat you up because you’re gay.”

Peacott explained, “When punk was still fresh and informing the direction of American music, there was more fuel for the fire. There was a lot more interest in politics and art in the late 70s than there is now.”

According to Peacott, who has been with Boston’s R.A.S. since its formation in 1981, the group took inspiration from similar

British movements in the 70s called Rock Against Sexism and Rock Against Racism. As far as she knows, Boston is the only United States city with an R.A.S. group. Ten women initially gathered to talk of creating non-sexist musical alternatives, and while the movement’s tenets have remained basically consistent since 1981, the group’s actions have varied as the membership has changed. Peacott described some political activism from R.A.S.’s past, including street theater satirizing the new right and an anti-rape action on the Boston Common. R.A.S. has thrown dance parties to benefit various groups like the Casa Myrna Vasquez women’s shelter, the lesbian soap opera *Two in Twenty* and the lesbian/gay March on Washington. Peacott also explained that the R.A.S. newsletter has varied its focus over the years by spotlighting different themes. The current issue addresses the topic of nonviolent vs. violent revolution.

“I was always a closet rock ’n roller,” Peacott said, explaining what drew her to R.A.S. “I was into the British punk scene...groups like the Slits, the Au Pairs, Gang of Four. Women were starting to play, it didn’t matter if they were polished. Women were doing all these loud, outrageous things that really encouraged me.”

Nicholas was similarly smitten with the hardcore scene, but the male atmosphere which she claims permeated many clubs stifled her at times. She first heard of R.A.S. about a year and a half ago at a multi-performance event of music, film and theater sponsored by Massachusetts College of Art. She said she was intrigued with the R.A.S. newsletter and pleased to find that she wasn’t the only one interested in both alternative music and feminism.

“Sometimes when I’d go into gay bars,” Nicholas said, “I wouldn’t like the music. So I’d go to straight clubs and definitely feel constrained. But I can be really comfortable at the R.A.S. tea dances.”

The twelve current members of R.A.S. — ten women and two men — meet about once a month. Smaller sub-groups meet to take on projects like the workshops and the newsletter. R.A.S. always welcomes new members and especially hopes to draw people of color into the group. Though Peacott

Continued on page 6



Excerpts from the Boston Globe's Stage Review



Funny, riveting show for gays and straights

By Susan Wilson
Special to the Globe

“So you think you know what’s new in Boston nightlife?...”

... Tom Wilson Weinberg’s nifty little sledgehammer of a show, called ‘The Ten Percent Revue,’... at the new Club Cabaret. The ‘Ten Percent’ part comes from the Kinsey Report’s famed statistic, that at least one out of every 10 people are gay or lesbian. The ‘Revue’ part comes from the mind of political activist and social commentator Weinberg...

“This new production of ‘Ten Percent Revue’... is based on almost two dozen brief vignettes chronicling the joys and sorrows of the gay experience...

“Though many of the jokes and situations are geared to an insider’s viewpoint and experiences, the messages are universal: how does a minority find itself, redefine itself and survive in a bigoted world? Weinberg’s answers are varied: we laugh (‘Homo Haven Fight Song’), we envy (‘Not Allowed,’ ‘If I Were/I’d Like to Be’)... experiment with new ideas (‘Turkey Baster Baby,’ ‘Safe Sex Slut’)... and we celebrate our growing numbers (‘We’re Everywhere,’ ‘Gay Name Game’).

“Though some point is made by every scene, Weinberg’s success is admittedly erratic... the show’s best moments are almost unilaterally in the funniest sketches... the cast indulges in a campy group reading of tabloid ‘Personals,’ poking fun at standard lines and double standards. (‘Gay White Male seeks same/No fats, fems, Blacks, Jews/... or bigots!’)

“While there are no outstanding ‘stars’... Vocally, each can generally handle Weinberg’s fascinating Broadway-inspired material. Visually, any of the four could be the boy or girl next door — which... is part of the point...

“A perfect combination, perhaps, for his incisive revue, where innocence battles evil — and self knowledge is the key to survival. Gay or straight can relate to that point, for sure.”

Extended thru December 27, including a special Christmas Day performance. Performance at 7:30 p.m.
December 26, second performance at 10:00 p.m.
For tickets call 536-0972, or stop by our Box Office.

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